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**New Sources for Targeted Web Site Traffic**

**By Lee Traupel**

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Qualified traffic is the lifeblood of any web site today, especially for ecommerce sites that are selling goods or services online. But, many media buyers and/or owners of web sites are paying too much for traffic by relying on top tier PPC ("pay per click") search engines like Overture or Google's Ad Words Select programs and others.

There is a new breed of web site traffic brokers emerging in the interactive marketing world that are brokering qualified traffic to the highest bidder on a CPC ("cost per click") basis. Traffic brokers bypass tried and true business processes by flipping the business proposition 180 degrees. They don't find clients and then optimize their web site for search engines; they do it the other way around, by developing and optimizing their own domains for top tier search engines and then reselling this traffic by redirecting it to a destination of their choosing in real time.

So, is this process illegal or unethical? It's hard to say. I don't believe these processes are more disingenuous than what's occurring with hidden "sponsorship listings" via top tier search engines, including Yahoo, MSN, LookSmart, Overture, etc. The latter are now starting to take up the lion's share of the first page on search results — these results are viewed tens of millions of times per day, with many people unaware that the results are "sponsored listings."

To muddy the digital waters even more, marketing services companies are starting to offer "trusted feed" traffic to companies who want to buy qualified traffic on a CPC ("cost per click") basis. This process is just starting to take hold in the marketplace and works by a marketing services firm contacting a prospective client and offering them "trusted feed" search engine listings on a top tier web site like MSN or LookSmart on a CPC "cost per click" basis. They (the marketing services firm) then build web site pages for their client that are based on their in-depth knowledge of what the search engines want and then submit these pages to the search engine/directory's editors who then review the sites, give the "client" a top tier listing site and then share in the CPC trusted feed revenue with the marketing services firm.

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It's getting pretty murky when you start to look closely at what and how traffic originates. I don't think brokering traffic is bad or unethical as long as the web site that is the final recipient of the traffic is offering goods and services that are identical to the referring web site. And, there is a self-policing component of these types of processes — the traffic brokers want repeat business, so it is in their self interest to make sure the redirected traffic is being sent to a similar web site.

Also, "conversion rates" (the number of people taking a specific action versus the amount of traffic) are rapidly becoming the final determinant of building a sustaining relationship between the traffic brokering firm and the recipient web site. If the traffic converts then the recipient typically wants to buy more, if not, they will move on to another source — this reinforces the self-policing aspects of the relationship.

So what do you look for if you want to start buying traffic from a web site traffic broker? Price is

certainly a large factor in determining what your interest should be; most of us in the traffic brokering business typically offer keyword traffic at about a third or half of what you would pay via a trusted feed setup, or Overture or an Ad Words Select program via Google. Expect to pay more for filtered ("automotive, insurance, telecommunications") versus unfiltered ("shopping mall type of traffic") as the former has to be carefully filtered for specific keywords or keywords sets so it can be distributed to a larger number of web sites.

Next, make sure you get a 24/7 reporting capability that enables you to analyze your traffic in real time — this report should show the originating keyword traffic (keywords are always embedded in the search string). And look carefully at your report; proxy traffic (or cached pages) should be filtered out so that there is no more than 5–10% of the total traffic — you can't get away from having some proxy traffic in this day in age, even AOL is using proxy servers. Finally, look closely at your report. The timelines should have some randomness in the sequences; if you see a traffic report with keyword traffic that is spaced very closely in terms of the timeline, warning bells should go off.

Lee Traupel has 20 plus years of marketing experience – he is the founder of Intelective Communications, Inc.

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**All Hits Are Not Created Equal**

**By Jim Edwards**

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## New Sources for Targeted Web Site Traffic

After all the debate over website design, shopping carts and credit card processors, every website owner eventually comes to the startling realization that they need one more thing to survive – website traffic!

Without website traffic it's the same as building an expensive billboard and, instead of placing it alongside a busy highway, you hide it in your basement where nobody can see it.

Upon realizing they need traffic, most website owners run out and start blowing chunks of money and time trying to get "hits" to their sites, but they fail to realize that all "hits" are not created equal.

In their quest to get eyeballs to their websites, most online operators don't realize there's a big difference between driving "general" traffic to your website and driving "targeted" traffic.

Just getting any traffic is the same technique TV advertisers use. They flash ads on the screen in front of people who can't afford or don't need the advertised product.

Since general advertising can't hit specific targets, they hit everyone and hope that someone in their target audience is actually watching at that moment. Spam, banner ads, "safe-lists" and similar traffic techniques fall into this "general" category.

"Targeted" traffic is made up of people who are genuinely interested in what you have to say or sell online. These people either share the same interests or have an immediate need or problem they are trying to solve.

"Targeted" traffic is best because the people hitting your website have a much higher likelihood of actually making a purchase.

Targeted traffic comes from people following

recommended links on other sites, typing in relevant keywords into the search engines, or even reading articles you've written on a particular subject and then clicking

over to your site for more information.

If you don't already know where to find the best sources of targeted traffic for your website, you will need to experiment with lots of different sources to find the ones that bring visitors who give you the most "bang for your buck."

The fastest way to determine which avenues provide the most targeted traffic is by using an "ad tracker". An "ad tracker" is a simple program, residing on your web server, that tracks how many visitors your site gets from a particular source and how many of them purchased.

Though it sounds simple, most businesses don't do this! Most businesses can't tell you their visitor to buyer conversion percentage and, therefore, don't know exactly how much they can invest in traffic generation and remain profitable.

Whether you pay for your website traffic with cash (pay-per-click search engines, ezine ads), or you pay for it with the sweat of your brow (article distribution, free search engines), you must identify your best and most profitable sources of targeted traffic that convert into buyers, subscribers, or leads.

Failure to identify and track where your buyers come from and then calculate how much they really cost you ultimately translates into failure for your online business.

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